

BALTIMORE CITY DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING
URBAN DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE REVIEW PANEL
MEETING MINUTES

Date: May 28, 2015

Meeting No.: 205

Project: Barclay Phase 3

Phase: Continued Schematic

Location: Greenmount Avenue – Barclay Neighborhood

PRESENTATION:

Catherine Stokes from Telesis Development introduced the project and the landscape architect, Kevin Wegner of Oehme, van Sweden & Associates, and Aaron Zephir of Marks Thomas Architects. This presentation focused upon Phase 3 of North Barclay Green, and in particular, the buildings along Greenmount Avenue that represent mixed use – commercial and residential. The site is challenged by significant grades descending from East 20th Street and a slight skew to the alignment of Greenmount so that the proposed buildings are just off of parallel from the street they face.

In response to the April 16th presentation (at which the landscape architect was not present as the discipline was not yet engaged by the developer), the Panel cited four specific areas of focus for refinement: a need for focused attention on the entrances to the proposed structures, in particular the grade-challenged area for Building 1 at 20th Street; the need for a comprehensive street and landscape plan; re-consideration of the architectural expression of the mid-block Greenmount Avenue structure; and a re-consideration of the pyramidal tower elements that mark the entrance to 20th Street.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PANEL:

Regrettably, there was limited investigation or expression of an investigation of a comprehensive streetscape study along Greenmount Avenue. Although reference was made to the Civil Engineer's requirements for and distribution of utilities beneath the sidewalk, no illustrative or mechanical document was offered which represented the limitations created by that infrastructure. Limited street trees on the first and mid-blocks resulted in an expanse of sidewalk that made the Avenue appear harsh. The limited areas within the project's property where utilities are not present were ignored for development.

Site:

- Develop a comprehensive streetscape study for Greenmount Avenue that focuses on opportunities for enhancement and habitation along the length of the proposed development.
- Where utilities would otherwise prevent trees, investigate other options for taming the expanse of proposed concrete, including plantings within the property lines where there are no utilities. In particular, take advantage of the skewed geometry of the site to create pockets of plantings and other socially-purposeful nodes.

- The proposed “corner café seating area” at 20th Street and Greenmount Avenue does seem to creatively resolve the topographic challenges of that corner. The stone wall that separates Building One from the adjacent built structure seems thin for the height it reaches. Consider making its thickness more substantial or consider tapering the wall so that it aligns with the adjacent up-hill stairs, acting as a cheek wall or rail support.
- The “portal” entrance to 20th Street is lacks definition. It requires a streetscape solution more thoughtful than a reliance on curb bulb-outs to be successful. It should speak to the residential quality of the street.

Buildings:

The panel believes that overall, the architectural expression of the proposed development has improved. There is some concern that the amount of retail identified in this proposal is high and will require additional neighborhood support to be successful.

- As seen from Greenmount Avenue, the façade heights of Buildings One and Two are different. Consider establishing the same elevation height across 20th Street.
- Although there is rigorous geometry applied to the buildings, the application of the “slots” does not seem to follow the same rigor. The attic story is continuous; consider greater variety.
- The east elevation of Building Three, though improved, is still very monolithic, and the plane changes are not deep enough to allow a shadow line to make a visual difference between planes.
- Address the top floor of the proposed buildings with consistency, working within the vernacular that has been established on previous construction, including the extended roof canopy.
- There is still concern for the architectural expression of the mid-block Greenmount Avenue element. That proposal still seems out of character with the other proposed elements.
- The tradition of a tower element on a Baltimore street corner is to mark an entrance. If they are intended to mark entry, the towers should be more substantial.

PANEL RECOMMENDATION: Recommend Continued Schematic development

Attending:

Magda Westerhout and Aaron Zephir - Marks Thomas Architects
 Catherine Stokes, Carol Tsoi and Jenny Hope - Telesis
 Kevin Wegner – Oehme, van Sweden & Associates
 Kevin Anderson – KCW

UDARP Panel Members – Dr. Judith Meany, Messrs. Gary Bowden, Rich Burns, David Haresign, and David Rubin*

Christina Hartsfield, Anthony Cataldo, Aaron Bond, and Reni Lawal - Planning Dept.